TWO ARGUMENTS ON *PETITES* PERCEPTIONS

by Mark Kulstad

The importance of perception for Leibniz is indicated by his claims that there exists nothing over and above simple substances and that there is nothing in simple substances but perceptions and their changes.[1] Perhaps the most intriguing element of his theory of perception is the view that, roughly, we have perceptions that we do not notice, perceptions of which we are not conscious, or, in Leibniz's words, *petites perceptions*. It is this view that I wish to explore in the present paper.

I will focus on two arguments found in the *New Essays Concerning Human Understanding*. One may be called the regress argument. It opposes the claim that we reflect, or "think expressly," upon all our thoughts. The other may be called the experiential argument. It relies heavily on a claim that may seem paradoxical, namely, that we have experiential (or introspective) evidence for the existence of *petites* perceptions. The connection between the two arguments is that their conclusions, at least allowing the following plausible reformulations of them, are equivalent:

(R) It is not the case that we reflect on or notice all our perceptions, and
(E) There are within us *petites* perceptions, i.e., perceptions which we do not reflect on or notice.

Both arguments are important not only as straightforward inferences to their conclusions but also (and more importantly for my purposes) as storehouses of suggestions about otherwise obscure aspects of Leibniz's theory of noticed and unnoticed perceptions. It is with the latter point primarily in mind that I turn to a consideration of first the experiential, then the regress argument.

I. The Experiential Argument

The experiential argument is found in the following passage, fairly early in the *New Essays*:

> often when we are not admonished, so to speak, and warned to take note of some of our own present perceptions, we allow them to pass without reflection, and even without being noticed; but if anyone directs our attention to them immediately after, and makes us

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> notice, for example, some noise which was just heard, we remember it, and apperceive having had at the time some sentiment of it. Thus there were perceptions which we did not apperceive at once, apperception arising in this case only . . . after some interval, however small it may be. (A vi. VI, 54; Ln, pp. 47-48)

The clearest statement of the conclusion in the text is this: "Thus there were perceptions which we did not apperceive at once." If we use the language of the earlier part of the passage, we can state the conclusion as follows: there are perceptions which occur without being reflected on, or without being noticed. More simply, we can say that Leibniz concludes here that there are *petites* perceptions.[2]

In arguing for this conclusion, Leibniz appeals, in an oblique way, to a kind of case he thinks will be familiar to the reader. Let me try to make this more definite by providing a concrete example of the sort of case Leibniz has in mind. Suppose *A* and *B* are using a two-man saw in a backyard. Being inexperienced, they are concentrating intently on their work. *A*, however, notices an unusual noise coming from a busy intersection nearby. "Did you hear that?" he asks. "What?" responds *B*. *A* replies, "It sounded like an accident just a moment ago." "Oh, yes," says *B*. "I believe I did hear that. Do you think there really was an accident?"

It will help if we cast this in Leibnizian terms. *A* had a perception of the noise and at once noticed it, or reflected on it, or apperceived it.[3] *B* also had a perception of the noise but, for whatever reason, allowed it to pass without reflection. Yet a moment later, when *A* brought the noise to *B*'s attention, *B* was able to recall having perceived the noise, or, to use Leibniz's language, he apperceived the perception of the noise. In short, *B* did not apperceive the perception immediately after it occurred, but only after a short interval had elapsed.[4]

This example should make clearer the sort of case Leibniz has in mind. But just how, it might be asked, does such a case show what Leibniz evidently wants to show, namely, that there are *petites* perceptions?

The case is pertinent in that it provides Leibniz with (what may seem surprising) experiential or observational evidence of the existence of *petites* perceptions. Leibniz would like to say, for instance, that when *B* apperceives his perception of the noise after some interval has elapsed, he is actually apperceiving, or has experience of, a *petite* perception and hence knows that there are *petites* perceptions.

This may seem puzzling; for it is customarily believed that a *petite* perception is precisely one of which we have no experience, which we do not apperceive. But the experiential argument indicates (and this is one of its chief merits) that this belief needs to be modified. What the argument indicates is that a *petite* perception is one that is not reflected on or apperceived *immediately* after it is experienced. This does not at all rule out the possibility that the very same perception may be reflected on or apperceived *after some interval*

has elapsed. And it is just this possibility that Leibniz exploits in the present argument, by pointing to cases in which we (apparently) notice perceptions only some time after they occur.

But we cannot leave the argument with this, for there is a crucial step that Leibniz leaves unmentioned. Consider again the structure of the argument. Leibniz wants to prove that there are *petites* perceptions. To do this he points to cases in which we seem to be aware of past perceptions that were not, as a matter of fact, reflected on at the time they occurred. But such awareness is not sufficient to prove that there are *petites* perceptions; for in addition to having experience of (and hence, I assume, knowledge of) the existence of a certain past perception, which as a matter of fact was not reflected on (at the time it occurred), one must also have experience or knowledge of the fact *that* it was not reflected on. This is the point that Leibniz simply passes over.

Now it might be responded that although Leibniz failed to mention this point, he was not at all unjustified in assuming that a person *would* know that he had failed to reflect on a perception experienced a moment or so before. I think this is right, but I also think it reveals something that is of no little consequence. Leibniz is justified in this assumption only if reflection is a conscious process. For if reflection were, at least sometimes, an unconscious process, it would be questionable whether we would ever be justified in claiming that we had failed to reflect on a perception experienced a moment before. Thus, the second key point about the experiential argument (the first key point, it will be recalled, is that a *petite* perception is one that is not reflected on *immediately* after it is experienced) is that it suggests rather strongly that Leibniz viewed reflection as a conscious process. (This important point will be examined again in the discussion of the regress argument.)

II. The Regress Argument

The regress argument is set out by Leibniz as follows:

> it is easy to show . . . that it is impossible for us always to think expressly upon all our thoughts; otherwise, the spirit would reflect upon each reflection to infinity without ever being able to pass to a new thought. For example, in my consciousness of some present feeling, I should always think that I think and still think that I think of my thought, and thus to infinity. But it is very necessary that I cease reflecting upon all these reflections, and that there be at length some thought which is allowed to pass without thinking of it; otherwise, we should dwell always upon the same thing. (Ln, pp. 118-119; A vi. VI, 118)

In the following three sections I shall discuss first the conclusion of the argument; second, certain temporal difficulties associated with the argument; and third, a problem concerning the role of consciousness in the argument. (Since this passage contains suggestions that have importance for several areas of Leibniz's thought, I shall sometimes go beyond what is immediately relevant to the regress argument.)

A. "Impossibility"

First, it should be noted that Leibniz's statement of the conclusion is misleading. He says, "it is impossible for us always to think expressly upon all our thoughts." What is troublesome here is the word 'impossible.' I do not think he means it in his usual strict sense, one in which a proposition is impossible just in case it implies a contradiction. Of course, he does think that Locke's claim, that we always think expressly upon all our thoughts, leads to an absurdity of sorts, namely, that we "dwell always on the same thing." But this is not contradictory; rather, it is, as a matter of fact, false. Hence, the conclusion of Leibniz's argument might be better formulated as follows: we *do not* think expressly upon all our thoughts.

B. Temporal Difficulties

A second point is that the regress argument indicates clearly that, on Leibniz's view, reflection takes some time, or, to put it more exactly, an infinite sequence of reflections takes an indefinitely long time to run through. It follows from this that a reflection on a thought is not perfectly simultaneous with the thought, for if it were, then a reflection on a reflection (itself a thought) would also be simultaneous with the original thought, and so on, so that an infinite sequence of reflections would last not a moment longer than the original thought.

I think this is fairly clear from the regress argument itself. But since the point is important, I would like to solidify it by considering a later passage in the *New Essays*:

> present or immediate memory, or the memory of what passed immediately before, i.e., the consciousness or reflection which accompanies internal action, cannot naturally deceive. Otherwise, one could not be certain even that one thinks this or that thing, because it is only about a past action that one says this within oneself and not about the action itself which says this. (Ln, p. 248; A vi. VI, 238)

The view that arises from this passage is the following: we have a thought, that is, we think this or that thing; then we reflect on this thought, this action; the reflection is itself an action, but not the same action as the one that is reflected on; rather, it is an action that occurs *immediately after* the original thought. Thus, this passage confirms the point made above, namely, that for Leibniz the act of reflection is not simultaneous with but subsequent to the thought reflected on.

A question arises here. Does it follow from the fact that a reflection occurs a bit after what is reflected on that an infinite sequence of reflections will continue indefinitely? The answer is no. Suppose, for example, that the first reflection takes place a half second after the original thought, the second reflection, one-quarter second after the first, the third, one-eighth second after the second, and so on; then no matter how many reflections are involved, the whole process can take no more than a second. *A fortiori*, it will not

continue indefinitely.[5] This points to the first temporal difficulty to be considered, namely, why should one conclude that an infinite sequence of reflections will continue indefinitely?

One answer, of course, is that the temporal gap between perception and reflection is never shorter than some specifiable interval. Unfortunately, Leibniz seems to deny that there is any interval at all. In the regress argument he speaks of reflection as a memory of "what passed *immediately* before" (emphasis mine). And the point is reinforced by what Leibniz says in the experiential argument. In that context he claims that when we notice a perception "after some interval, however small it may be" instead of "at once" (I take this to mean immediately after, with no time intervening), we may truly say that the original perception occurred "without reflection" (Ln, p. 48). This suggests that Leibniz means "immediately before" quite strictly: action x occurs immediately before action y only if there is no interval, "however small it may be," between the moments at which x and y occur. This leaves a problem, however: since it is commonly held that between any two moments there is an infinity of moments (and hence, presumably, an interval), it is hard to see how any action can be immediately before any other. This brings us to the second temporal difficulty, namely, what clear sense can Leibniz assign to the phrase 'immediately before' that will enable him to make his point about reflection without paradox?

The above observations turn at least in part on the assumption that an action occurs at a moment, i.e., instantaneously. There is, however, no obvious reason to assume this. Actions (most crucially, those of perception and reflection) might take time to perform. Indeed, this seems to be Leibniz's view, for he says that "action requires a period of time" (Ln, p. 702).[6]

Given this, I would like to propose a theory that saves Leibniz from temporal difficulties such as the ones raised above. The theory is consistent with the text (though at points going beyond it), and provides a more precise idea of what occurs in reflection.

On this theory, perceptions and reflections are actions that are not instantaneous but take some finite amount of time to perform. (I shall assume that there is some lower bound here, some period of time so short that no perception or reflection could run its course completely within such an interval.) Further, if x is a perception and y is a reflection on x, and if x ends at time t, then to say that y occurs immediately after x is to say that y occurs during the interval comprising every moment after t up to and including some later moment t' (intuitively, the moment at which reflection y ceases).[7] Similar remarks could be made about any higher order reflection.

On this theory the two problems mentioned above vanish. An infinite sequence of reflections on reflections *would* continue indefinitely into the future. And the phrases 'immediately before' and 'immediately after' would be assigned a reasonably clear sense. To sum up, probing a little into the

temporal difficulties of the regress argument has suggested a theory that clarifies the argument, resolves the difficulties mentioned above, and may be of assistance in dealing with other parts of the Leibnizian text. I shall assume the theory in what follows.

C. Conscious Thoughts

I turn now to a third issue connected with the regress argument, namely, the assumption that an infinite regress of reflections would somehow block us from passing to a new thought. (It seems plausible to say that by the term 'new thought,' Leibniz means a conscious thought which is different from and not a reflection on any immediately preceding thought.)

One might come to believe that Leibniz is assuming here that since we cannot have more than one perception at any given moment, the presence of a reflection—itself a perception[8]—rules out the possibility of any other perception (*a fortiori*, any other thought) being present in us at the same moment. But given Leibniz's statement in the preface of the *New Essays* that there are many, indeed infinitely many perceptions present within us at each moment (Ln, p. 47), he cannot be assuming this. Hence we must ask: why does Leibniz think that the presence of a reflection at a moment excludes the possibility of our having a new thought (different from the reflection) at that moment?

An easy response is that Leibniz is not thinking about just any perceptions in his views on blocking, but about what he would call apperceptions (and what we might call conscious thoughts). He is assuming, not that there can be only one perception in our minds at a moment (for that is too clearly contradicted by the text), but that there can be only one apperception, only one conscious thought in our minds at any given moment. Given this assumption, and the assumption that a reflection is a conscious thought, it is easy to see how the presence of a continuous series of reflections would block us from ever passing to a new thought.[9]

Of course, someone might claim that he sometimes has more than one conscious thought in his mind. And it might be argued that until this possibility is ruled out, Leibniz's argument is in trouble. This is a bit strong. Leibniz's argument is defensible (on the present count at least) as long as the following plausible principle is granted: even if some humans can entertain more than one conscious thought at a moment, the maximum number that can be entertained is finite, and certainly fewer than the number of different new thoughts (conscious ones) that a person has in a normal lifetime.

Once this principle is granted, Leibniz's argument can be revised to deal with the possibility that a human might entertain more than one conscious thought at a time. Let n be the maximum number of conscious thoughts a human can have in mind at a moment. Assume that (A) every new thought is reflected on, and also every reflection. Then at the moment when a person (whom we will assume to have a normal life span) experiences his nth different

new thought, he will have reached the end of his interesting mental life: he will never be able to pass to a new thought but will instead spend the rest of his days in continuous reflection on his earlier thoughts. This conflicts, however, with the last part of the principle set out in the preceding paragraph. Hence the assumption about universal reflection (A) is to be rejected.

This resolves one possible difficulty with the view that a reflection, as a *conscious* thought, blocks us from passing to a new thought. But there is another difficulty, which arises whether we believe that the maximum number of conscious thoughts we can entertain at a moment is one or many. Why should we grant that, for Leibniz, each reflection is a *conscious* thought? What evidence is there that he holds this view?

We have already encountered some evidence that on Leibniz's view each reflection is a conscious thought. (Recall the second main point concerning the experiential argument.) But the point is important enough, and leads into sufficiently interesting areas, that it merits further consideration. I shall proceed by first setting out a pair of alternatives about what happens when a chain of reflections ceases (as it must, according to Leibniz) and then presenting both systematic and more directly textual reasons for favoring one alternative over the other. With this as backdrop, I will summarize the reasons for thinking that a reflection is a conscious thought.

To introduce the two alternatives, I reproduce part of the regress argument:

> But it is very necessary that I cease reflecting upon all these reflections, and that there be at length some thought which is allowed to pass without thinking of it; otherwise, we should dwell always upon the same thing. (Ln, p. 119; A vi. VI, 118)

The question to focus on is this: what happens at the moment when "at length some thought . . . is allowed to pass without [my] thinking of it?" We know that this thought will not be reflected on; that is the point of the argument. But given the assumption that reflection is a conscious thought, we are left with two possibilities: (1) I do not perceive the thought at all (and hence do not reflect on it, since a reflection is, at a minimum, a perception of another perception); and (2) I *do* perceive the thought, but my perception of it is not a conscious thought (and hence not a reflection, given the assumption that a reflection is a conscious thought). The first alternative is perhaps what a reader of the regress argument would most naturally expect. But it is important to note that the second alternative is perfectly compatible with (and may even be suggested by) Leibniz's conclusion, namely, that "it is impossible for us always to think *expressly* upon all our thoughts" (my emphasis).

Leibniz may have room in his theory of perception not only for reflections, i.e., for what I am now assuming to be conscious perceptions of perception, but also for what might be called semi-reflections,[10] i.e., perceptions of perceptions in which the higher level perceptions are not conscious.

It might be thought that the second possibility mentioned above is simply too far-fetched to merit consideration. This is hardly the case. There is direct textual evidence that Leibniz would in fact accept the claim that we perceive every thought, indeed every perception that we have. And there are indications that such a claim, namely, that we perceive every perception that we have (I might add, immediately after we have had it[11]), might play an important systematic role in a number of Leibnizian doctrines.

We may consider the systematic role first. Leibniz claims that a substance expresses everything that happens in the universe. I have argued elsewhere that there is good reason to think that the particular type of expression involved here is perception,[12] that is, if a monad expresses everything, it perceives everything. Thus, if there were perceptions that were not perceived, Leibniz's expression thesis, in the general form it usually takes, would be contradicted.[13]

In the second place, there is the suggestion in the *New Essays* that just as reflection on thoughts serves to constitute the moral or personal identity of a human being, so perception of perceptions serves to constitute the real or metaphysical identity of a human being. Again, if it were not the case that every perception we have is itself perceived, this might contradict Leibniz's theory of metaphysical identity. (For text on this issue, see below.)

In the third place, Leibniz maintains a view sometimes referred to as the doctrine of marks and traces, according to which "each substance always contains in it traces of all that has happened to it and marks of all that will happen to it" (G II, p. 39). One way to interpret this doctrine is to view a monad as a deterministic system such that all past and future states of the system are deducible given the present state of the system and its laws. On this interpretation, nothing follows about a substance perceiving all its perceptions. But there is another possible interpretation of the doctrine, one in which a substance has all necessary marks and traces at a moment just in case it has, at that moment, perceptions of all that has happened and all that will happen to it. If we did not perceive every perception immediately after we had it (though perhaps unconsciously), this interpretation would be contradicted.

We find evidence for the second of these interpretations, and for the theory of real identity alluded to above, in one concentrated passage from the *New Essays.* Here too we find a part of the direct textual evidence that on Leibniz's view we perceive at each moment the perceptions we had a moment before.

> An immaterial being or a spirit *cannot be stripped* of all perception of its past existence. There remain for it some impressions of all that has formerly happened to it, and it even has some presentiments of all that will happen to it; but these feelings are most often too small to be capable of being distinguished and perceived, although they may perhaps sometime be developed. This continuation and bond of *perceptions* constitutes in reality the same individual, but the *apperceptions* (i.e., when past feelings are apperceived

[*lorsqu'on s'apperçoit des sentiments passés*]) prove besides a moral identity and make real identity appear. (Ln, pp. 249-250; A vi. VI, 239)

Leaving aside any mention of the relevance of this passage to Leibniz's theories of real identity and marks and traces, I shall simply note the strong suggestion here that on Leibniz's view we have at each moment perceptions of all our past and future perceptions, *a fortiori*, of all perceptions which we have just had.

A second passage provides direct textual evidence for the same point. Since it was written approximately twenty-five years before the *New Essays,* there may be some question about its value as evidence of Leibniz's later thought. The remarkable parallels between the earlier passage and the one containing the regress argument, however, suggest that it ought to be taken seriously.

> It sometimes happens that I cannot forget something, but involuntarily think of the same thing for almost an hour, and then think of this difficulty in thinking and stupefy myself into reflections through perpetual reflections, so that I almost begin to doubt that I shall ever think of anything else. . . . But if you observe well, this act will merely make you remember that you already had this in mind a little previously, that is, this reflection of reflection, and so you observe it and designate it by a distinct image accompanying it. Therefore it already was in your mind earlier, and so perception of perception goes on perpetually in the mind to infinity. In it consists the existence of the mind per se and the necessity of its continuation. (L, p. 161)

In the first place, it is obvious that Leibniz has, already at this early date, become aware of the possibility of an unending sequence of reflections. In the second place, it is clear that he recognizes a possible consequence of such a sequence, namely, that it might prevent a person from ever thinking of anything else, that is, of ever passing to a new thought. Together these two points constitute a striking anticipation of the regress argument. But it is a third point that is of most interest. In this passage Leibniz distinguishes, with reasonable clarity, an unending sequence of reflections on reflections from a like sequence of perceptions of perceptions.[14] The former he views as definitely problematic (just as he does in the *New Essays*); the latter, which is closely connected to the thesis I have been arguing for above, he accepts as obtaining in fact. (What is more, he links it closely to his views on identity, just as he does in the *New Essays*.)

It might be asked how the remarks of the preceding pages are related to the question of whether a reflection is a conscious thought. They are related in this way: The upshot of those pages is that, on Leibniz's view, each perception in our minds is itself perceived immediately after it occurs. The consequence of this is, as Leibniz says, that "perception of perception goes on . . . in the mind to infinity." Now if a reflection is nothing more than a perception of a perception (we know it is at least this[15]), then reflections on reflections also go on to infinity, directly contradicting a central claim of the regress argument. But if a reflection is a conscious thought (if, for instance, it is a perception of

a perception in which the higher level perception is a conscious one), then we can allow infinite sequences of perceptions of perceptions without committing ourselves to infinite sequences of reflections of reflections.

Again, if a reflection is nothing more than a perception of a perception (there being no necessity that the higher level perception be conscious), then it is hard to see why the reflections in a long chain of reflections would necessarily block passage to a new thought any more than do the infinitely many *petites* perceptions that are always present in the mind. If, on the other hand, we allow that a reflection is a conscious perception of a perception, it becomes quite plausible that a chain of reflections (or perhaps several of them) would block passage to a new thought, and the regress argument retains its plausibility.

Neither of these points shows conclusively that for Leibniz a reflection is a conscious thought. But taken together with the second point discussed in connection with the experiential argument, they suggest strongly that this is the case.

III. Conclusions

In this section I summarize the chief points of this paper.

1. The claim that we cannot be directly aware of our *petites* perceptions must be qualified. *Petites* perceptions are not, it is true, reflected on or apperceived immediately after they occur. But they can be, and in some cases are, remembered or apperceived or reflected on after some time has passed. This point makes the experiential argument for the existence of *petites* perceptions possible.

2. It is not *impossible* that we have within us unending sequences of reflections on reflections; rather, this is not in fact the case.

3. Certain temporal difficulties connected with the regress argument can be resolved, consistently with the text, by means of the theory proposed in section IIB. Two key elements of that theory are

   (i) the view that perceptions and reflections are not instantaneous events but actions that take some time to perform, and

   (ii) a definition of 'immediately after.'

4. A reflection is a conscious thought.

5. There is evidence that for Leibniz each perception in our minds is the object of another perception (not necessarily conscious) that occurs immediately after the first.

6. There is even evidence that on Leibniz's view we perceive at every moment all our former perceptions.

(With respect to 5 and 6, it seems that the most interesting evidence, and perhaps the most interesting application of the work of this paper, will be found in Leibniz's theory of real or metaphysical identity.)

7. It is not correct to say that *petites* perceptions are simply perceptions that are not perceived. Rather, they are perceptions that are not consciously perceived immediately after they occur.

NOTES

In this paper I use the following abbreviations for citations: A = Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, Academy edition (Darmstadt and Berlin, 1923—); G = *Die philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, C. I. Gerhardt, ed., 7 vols. (Berlin, 1875-1890); L = *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: Philosophical Papers and Letters*, edited and translated by L. E. Loemker, second edition (Dordrecht, 1969); Ln = *New Essays Concerning Human Understanding by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, translated by A. G. Langley (New York, 1896).

1. L, p. 644. As the claim indicates, Leibniz uses the term 'perception' in a very broad sense.

2. Problems of terminology abound: in addition to '*petite* perception,' we are confronted with the terms 'apperceive,' 'reflect on,' and 'notice.' It would be best, of course, to have clear and precise definitions of all of these. Unfortunately, such definitions are not easy to come by. In this paper I shall take steps toward developing them, but I do not claim to work out any in full detail. For the present I shall content myself with the following points about these terms: (1) Robert McRae, in his *Leibniz: Perception, Apperception, and Thought* (Toronto and Buffalo, 1976), p. 33, claims that for Leibniz the terms 'apperception,' 'consciousness,' and 'reflection' are equivalent; I shall accept this and add that in at least some of its uses 'noticing' should be added to the list; (2) a *petite* perception is ot necessarily one which is *never* noticed, apperceived, or reflected upon; as we shall see below, it is one which is not noticed, apperceived, or reflected upon *immediately after* it occurs.

3. It might seem more natural to say that one noticed or apperceived the noise rather than the perception of the noise. (I am assuming—and think the passage makes it appropriate to assume—that the noise is not itself an event in *A*'s or *B*'s mind.) At least in the experiential argument, however, it is clear that Leibniz is talking about noticing or apperceiving a *perception*. Therefore, I shall talk in this way too.

4. For a more exact treatment of the temporal elements of this case, see below.

5. That is, if reflections occur instantaneously. See below for a consideration of this condition.

6. It is true that this quotation occurs in a passage discussing the actions of bodies, but given the close connection between actions in bodies and monads (see Ln, pp. 174-175 and L, p. 579), it seems plausible to extend the claim to the actions of monads.

7. It is true that on this theory we cannot talk about *the* moment at which reflection *y* begins, for there is no such moment. But it does not follow from this that we are left with some difficulty about just when *y* occurs, for we have specified this quite exactly.

8. For some, the claim of section seventeen of the *Monadology* that there is nothing to be found in simple substances but perceptions and their changes will be sufficient to support this. For others, a passage later in the *New Essays* should be conclusive, though a bit of study is needed to see this (v. Ln, p. 248).

9. Here and in what follows I assume an understanding of the phrase, 'conscious thought.' I am not altogether happy in doing this, at least in part because the question of what a conscious thought is lies close beneath the surface throughout the *New Essays* and in the regress argument itself. Nonetheless, the difficulty of the question leads me to adopt this course of action.

10. I coin this term in analogy to Leibniz's own term, "semi-pains." (See Ln, p. 170.)

11. Some confusion may arise because of the considerable number of views possible concerning the perception of perceptions. I shall here list some of them, making comments where appropriate. (These are not quotations from Leibniz, but views which might be attributed to him.)

(1) The only time we have a perception of a perception is when we reflect on a perception. (Comment: this is a view that is probably common among readers of the *New Essays*. One of the purposes of this paper is to present the case against it. It might be noted that if (1) were correct, then only spirits could have perceptions of perceptions, for "the soul of a beast has no more reflection than an atom" [L, p. 588; presumably the same point applies to bare monads]. This is not in itself an objection to (1) but might serve as the basis for one, particularly if perceptions of perceptions turned out to be essential in the explanation of the real or metaphysical identity of *all* monads, not just spirits.)

(2) Monads can, and sometimes do, perceive a perception without reflecting on it, but it is not the case that they perceive *every* perception they have had, or even every perception they have just had. (Comment: (2) could itself be divided into a great many different views.)

(3) At each moment each spirit perceives all the perceptions which it has just had. (Comment: it is obvious that this leads to the view that there are infinite sequences of perceptions of perceptions. This is perfectly compatible, however, with the denial of the view that there are infinite sequences of [conscious] reflections.)

(4) At each moment each spirit perceives all the perceptions it has ever had, i.e., all the perceptions it has had before the moment in question. (Comment: the proliferation of perceptions becomes mind-boggling at this point. Nonetheless, we shall soon encounter textual evidence that Leibniz accepts this and more.)

(5) At each moment each spirit perceives all the perceptions it has had before that moment and all the perceptions it will have after that moment.

(6), (7), and (8): Substitute 'monad' for 'spirit' in (3), (4), and (5).

12. See Mark Kulstad, "Leibniz's Expression Thesis," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (University of Michigan, 1975), chapter 2.

13. To solidify the point, it should be noted that Leibniz views a perception as something that happens to a substance: "nothing can happen to use except thoughts and perceptions" (*Discourse on Metaphysics*, section 14).

14. It might be objected that his phrase, "this reflection of reflection," opposes the distinction I am claiming, or at least shows that Leibniz was somewhat confused. I do not think so. The context reveals that the phrase refers to a process of which we are not conscious. This does conflict with the usage of the *New Essays*, where 'reflection' seems to be found only in connection with conscious processes. But the conflict is only verbal. If the word 'reflections' in my statement of the distinction is taken to refer to conscious acts, it seems to me that the statement is correct.

15. See Ln, pp. 119 and 248 for confirmation (although not an explicit statement) of this view.